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published in
Journal of Empirical Theology : JET
2018

DOI (link to publisher)
10.1163/15709256-12341365

document version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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JOURNAL OF EMPIRICAL THEOLOGY 31 (2018) 18-48

Journal of Empirical Theology

brill.com/jet

Exploring Single and Multiple Religious Belonging

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Abstract

This contribution studies the notion of single and multiple religious belonging in a sample of 265 Dutch respondents. We will first focus on modalities of religious belonging and subsequently compare those who claim to draw from just one religion (the monoreligious) with those who indicate that they combine elements from different religious traditions (the multireligious) in terms of their intensities and styles of belonging, loyalty and mobility, and motivations for belonging. In general, multireligious respondents are characterized by their larger flexibility in religious matters as they tend to focus on similarities and common elements in different religions, and less on boundaries between them. By being loyal to themselves in the first place, they feel free to adopt and to leave behind religious beliefs and communities. Emotional and institutional bonds for each religion appear to be less strong than for monoreligious individuals in relation to their single religion.

 | DOI 10.1163/15709256-12341365

Keywords

religious belonging – multiple religious belonging – religious commitment – religious flexibility – openness – loyalty – motivation

1 Introduction

In this contribution, we aim to define 'multiple religious belonging' (MRB) and explore its main empirical characteristics in contemporary Dutch society on the basis of a survey study. First, we will clarify our research focus and offer a conceptual account of religious belonging from which we derive four research questions. In the following paragraph we describe the research setup, clarify the sample of Dutch respondents and indicate how the data were collected and subsequently analysed. What follows is a paragraph that deals with the answers to the research questions. And finally we will offer a discussion of the findings.

2 Multiple Religious Belonging

All too often, measures of religiosity are solely based on the extent to which people regard themselves as committed to a single spiritual tradition of texts, beliefs and practices. From an empirical perspective, there is every reason to assume that religious commitment does not always imply fixed and lasting combinations of belonging and believing. Quite on the contrary comparative research with representative data from 1981 to 2007 in 42 European countries has clarified strongly varying national combinations of believing in terms of religious self-definition and belonging in terms of church participation (Reitsma et al. 2014; Schilderman 2014). Also, at the individual level persons may display variations in their religious commitment. Individuals may combine elements from different religious traditions in their lives, and display different degrees of commitment to each of these traditions (Cornille 2002). Sociologists of religion state that differences in individual religiosity within religious institutions are often just as large as those between them (McGuire 2008). In addition, the research of folk- and popular religion informs us of the enormous diversity within established religions in terms of varying convictions, ritual expression and moral views. As Cornille states, in the wider history of religion, religious hybridity may have been the rule rather than the

exception (Cornille 2002). This phenomenon indeed seems to be substantiated by empirical evidence. According to the German *Religionsmonitor* 2013, 26% of the inhabitants of former West-Germany and 13% of former East-Germany draw from different religious traditions. Interestingly, these numbers are larger among the affiliated—especially among Muslims with 42%—than among the non-affiliated (Pollack and Müller 2013). Also outside of Europe, national surveys give evidence of large openness towards religions other than one's own and of involvement with more than one religion. About one in four American adults (24%) indicate that they attend services of at least one faith other than their own, and roughly one-in-ten (12%) say they participate in the services of two or more faiths in addition to their own, aside from weddings and funerals (Pew Forum 2009). In 2014, two-thirds of Americans who identified with a religious group say many religions (not just their own) can lead to eternal life. This view is held by a majority of Christians (66%), Jews (79%), Muslims (65%), Buddhists (86%), and Hindus (69%) (Pew Research Center 2015). In addition to these general indications, recent more detailed research by Berghuijs (2017) in a representative survey in the Netherlands indicated that 23% of the population combines elements of different religious traditions in their lives. Indications like these suggest that religious traditions are no static entities, but that they continuously interact with their cultural surroundings, including other religions. In Western contexts the established religions no longer represent stable monopolies that institutionally bind their adherents to exclusive confessions and practices. They seem to gradually grow into secular settings, due to processes of globalization and migration, rationalization and individualization, which seem to allow for more than one religious identification. How should this development in which religious traditions meet be understood in terms of processes of religious belonging? The idea of belonging no longer seems to assume clear-cut criteria of institutional assignment, group membership or cultural association. Rather, belonging has characteristics of personal choice, appropriation and ownership, turning individual religion into a far more hybrid forms. Belonging increasingly expresses private attributions of connectedness and a personal assumption of relations that formerly were far more subjected to procedures of socialisation and institutional control and conceptualized as such in prevailing research.

An innovative international research trend studies this hybrid religiosity from the paradigm of *multiple religious belonging* (*MRB*). The phenomenon, initially coined from within theology, is now studied in various disciplines. Topics discussed and investigated include: the possibility and desirability to 'belong' to more than one religion in relation to the self-understanding and truth claims of established religious traditions; the interpretation of 'religious

belonging' and 'religious identity' in relation to more than one religion; the neglection of forms of hybrid religiosity often present among women and suppressed groups; MRB and secularization; the development of new, hybrid religions; and MRB in Western countries as compared to East-Asian mixed religious practices (Cornille 2002, 2003; Bernhardt and Schmidt-Leukel 2008; Berghuijs 2017; Oostveen 2017; Braak 2017).

Among some theologians, there is a discussion about the possibility and desirability of multiple religious belonging. Whereas some stress exclusive and strong commitment to one religious tradition as a precondition for adoption of any 'external' religious element (Cornille 2003; Phan 2003), others are more inclined to adopt a less normative view that emphasizes individual religiosity in terms of flexibility, connectedness, heterogeneity, and plurality, which adds new and valuable insights and experiences into one's primary faith (Voss Roberts 2010; Schmidt-Leukel 2008, 2009; Kalsky 2012, 2017).

In the literature, the use of the concept of belonging is differentiating and shifting. Lähdesmäki et al (2016) have reviewed the literature in a wide variety of disciplines. Their analysis suggests that by employing the concept of belonging, scholars seek to emphasize the fluid, unfixed, and processual nature of diverse social and spatial forms of religious attachment. The authors show that belonging is used for involvement of people in larger settings, and they emphasize that this involvement is often both complex, multilayered, hybrid, ambiguous and fragmented, and often involves an emotional dimension. Therefore we hold that the involvement of people with one or more religious traditions or elements of traditions is best approached by employing the concept of belonging acknowledging its complex and fluid character, and emphasizing characteristics of personal choice and ascription. Following this view, we define religious belonging as the variety of ways in which individuals are connected to one or more religious traditions, by combining elements (texts, beliefs, practices or other) from one or more traditions in their lives. Multiple religious belonging is then defined as combining elements from more than one religious tradition in one's life.

In such an approach, MRB ranges from people who are intensely involved in two religions and who are members of two religious communities, to 'unaffiliated spirituals' who combine elements from different religious traditions, without joining a religious community, and everything in between, for instance Christians who practice Zen meditation. Therefore MRB, as understood here, exemplifies stronger flexibility in religious commitment than institutional norms of a religion assume and prescribe. In our study, we will now explore religious belonging from four analytical perspectives, i.e. its modalities, bonding styles, mobilities and motivations.

A first perspective studies religious belonging in terms of the modalities according to which people relate to religious traditions. Our modalities approach builds on the dimensions of religiosity as developed by Glock and Stark (1962) and Smart (1998). Glock and Stark distinguish the intellectual, the ideological, the experiential, the ritualistic, and the consequential dimensions (Glock and Stark 1962). Smart defines more or less similar dimensions: the practical and ritual, the experiential and emotional, the narrative or mythic, the doctrinal and philosophical, the ethical and legal, the social and institutional, and the material dimensions (Smart, 1998). In line with Berghuijs (2017) we have translated these dimensions into modalities of religious belonging (see next paragraph). Now while it is obvious that from an institutional and confessional perspective all these modalities may be regarded necessary assets to define one's belonging as a believer, this may not reflect the individual's own stance. At least when extensive external control is lacking, some modalities may be experienced as less significant or they may be compared to alternatives in other religious traditions as soon as these become available as experiential or practical opportunities. Combinations of religious elements per person can concern different modalities of one religion (monoreligious belonging), or modalities of more than one religion (multireligious), for instance combining beliefs of one religion with practices from another.

A second perspective relates to religious bonding styles. Social control theorist Hirschi (1969) distinguishes four social bonding styles that we apply to religion. A first characteristic style is 'attachment' that refers to the symbolic link between a person and his religion that is felt as a stable and strong social connection that keeps him from violating the spiritual norms of the group that he is part of. A second characteristic is 'commitment' which refers here to the personal investment in a religious practice, institution or group, which keeps the person attached simply because he or she has a lot to lose. Thirdly, 'involvement' refers to the practice of interaction which keeps a believer attached to a religion, because of the amount of time and energy spent to his religion; which leaves no obvious alternative necessary to invest in other bonds. Finally and fourthly, 'belief' refers to the conviction that the religious bond is intrinsically valuable and valid in terms of the socially shared values and norms. Thus believers may display a variety of styles in belonging to one or multiple religions. This distinction in belonging styles builds on the notion that a religion is not a total institution in the sense of complete normative control, but that individual believers vary; i.e. they differ in their reactions towards the control that a religion exerts simply because they entertain different styles for engagement. Hence, various religions may play into these styles and act as opportunities for

commitment or involvement in one instance and as incentive for attachment or belief in another.

As a third approach, we focus on religious mobility, i.e. the actual choices that believers make in expressing their belonging towards a religion. Here, the focus is mainly on the quality of one's self-considered membership of a religion. As such it also indicates a likelihood for religious mobility; i.e. openness to change one's religious belonging. Economist Hirschman (1970, 1981) offered a by now classical distinction between options that people have when they grow dissatisfied in their belonging to an organization, such as a church or other religious group in this adaptation of his theory. When believers express discontent with their church, they may choose the option of 'exit': they withdraw from their relationship and choose another religious institution or group or none at all – which does not necessarily imply that they become irreligious. Another option is to invest their dissatisfaction within their institution in order to reform the church or mobilize forces for internal improvement, which reflects a 'voice'-option. Thirdly, an option is 'loyalty', which reinforces the sense of belonging even if one may not be completely convinced that the choice for this particular religion matches one's priorities or needs best. Finally, the option 'access' reflects a choice to adopt a belief or enter into a religious organization that apparently offers better conditions for satisfying one's religious norms, needs or expectations. Thus, this distinction of choice puts the issue of MRB in a process perspective.

In the fourth place, and closely connected to the three perspectives described above, we turn towards the theme of motivations for religious belonging. Today, more than in the past, religious commitment is a personal choice, involving personal motivations. Motivation has been formulated in terms of human needs and goals. As such, motivations form an undercurrent for the three approaches described above. A classical distinction is that between intrinsic, extrinsic and quest religious motivations or attitudes, dependent on people's 'ultimate concern'. An extrinsic attitude makes religion a means to another end, like certainty, comfort, social contacts and status; intrinsic religiosity puts religion itself in the first place; other needs are put in accordance with religiosity (Allport and Ross 1967). In addition, people may see their religious efforts as a quest, characterized by openness in existential issues (Batson 1976). These three religious attitudes do not exclude each other; they can be seen as three different dimensions of religious orientation (Batson and Ventis 1982). In case of MRB an individual may have a different motivation per religious tradition that he or she draws from. For instance, someone can be intrinsically Christian, but at the same time practice Hindu rituals in a family setting.

In our study, we will now clarify these four perspectives of religious belonging empirically in a sample of Dutch respondents interested in religion(s). First, we will study the variety in relations our sample displays in relation to different religious traditions. Subsequently, we will study bonding style, mobility and motivation by operationalizing these into dependent variables, and by subsequently comparing respondents who claim to focus on one religious tradition only (the 'monoreligious') with those who indicate that they combine elements of two or more religious traditions in their lives (the 'multireligious') as independent variables.

This leads us to the following research questions:

1. What is the variety in relations that the respondents entertain with different religious traditions?
2. What are the differences in styles of belonging among individuals who focus on one religion as compared to those who draw from multiple religions?
3. What is the likelihood for religious mobility when comparing individuals who focus on one religion as compared to those who draw from multiple religions?
4. What are the motivations for belonging among individuals who focus on one religion as compared to those who draw from multiple religions?

3 Research Design

Our research is of a descriptive and explorative nature. We employ a non-representative sample of persons that is intrinsically interested in religion from a country in which we expect that MRB is thriving. The Netherlands is such a country that up until the sixties of last century was strongly subdivided along lines of Christian and other worldviews that were organized by strong institutions deeply embedded in Dutch culture; a structure known as 'pilleralization', where separate institutional pillars of religious and political worldviews supported the roof of Dutch society. Empirical research shows longitudinal trends of a gradual loss in religious affiliation over the last decades. Whereas half of the Dutch population regularly attended church in 1966, this percentage declined to 12% in 2015. Today, almost 60% never attends church anymore. A personal God was embraced by 47% in 1966; a percentage that declined to 14 % in 2015. Nowadays about a quarter of the population considers themselves an atheist and 34 % labels themselves as agnostic. This secularization trend

however does not necessarily imply a lack of openness towards religion altogether. Significant majorities among church members, unaffiliated 'believers', unaffiliated 'spirituals' and even secular respondents agree with statements that religion has many sources, that you can construct your own religious alternative, and that one can combine elements of religions (Bernts and Berghuijs 2016). Therefore, we expect that this coincidence of secularization and openness towards religion makes the Dutch an ideal population to study aspects of religious belonging.

For this study, we employed the results of two combined online surveys. From April 2015 to January 2016, we gathered data on modalities of religious belonging with a widely promoted online questionnaire, leading to 961 responses. In April and May 2016, we investigated the other three perspectives on religious belonging in a follow-up survey. Invitations to participate to the second survey were sent by e-mail to those 451 respondents who had participated in the first survey, and who had indicated to welcome follow-up surveys. We combined the results of both surveys, by employing a sample of respondents that had participated in both. After data cleaning, the response for our final survey was 265, being 59% of the 451 invited in the follow-up. All 265 have completed the first questionnaire, and 88% of the 265 have completed the second. We emphasize that we did not strive for a representative sample, but quite on the contrary were interested in those actively motivated to report on their religious commitment. The sample consists of 40,1% men and 59,9% women. Ages ranged from 17 to 87 with an average of 51,5 (s.d. 14,5). When compared to national averages our sample obviously overrepresents the older generation, especially those in their fifties and beyond, while it is also abundantly clear that the higher educated participated, with 75% of our respondents having a master or bachelor degree.

3.1 *Measures and Respondents*

We used two different ways to measure if a respondent combines elements of more than one religious tradition.

1) The first, detailed way is through the modalities perspective, using a large set of questions based on the modalities of religious belonging and a choice of religious traditions related to each modality (further explanation below). If a respondent agrees to one or more of the items related to a specific modality and a specific religion, he or she is counted as having a relation to that religion. A person who has relations to two or more religious traditions on one or more modalities per religion is then counted as an MRBer.

2) The second, more simple way is to ask the respondent directly, using a single question: to what extent do you agree with the statement: 'I combine elements of different religious traditions in my life'? Those who do agree to the statement, and subsequently name their two most important religious traditions, we call the multireligious. Those who do not combine, and indicate that there is a single religion from which they draw, we call the monoreligious.

Due to the differences in measurement, the group of multireligious (by selfdefinition) is not equal to the group of MRBers determined through the modalities approach (by researcher-based definition). This effect also occurs if both methods are used in a single survey, as was demonstrated by Berghuijs (2017).

In the first survey, we used the modalities approach. Berghuijs (2017) distinguishes seven 'modalities of belonging', inspired by the dimensions of religiosity as developed by Glock and Stark (1965) and Smart (1998):

- Affinity: affinity with religion by inspiration, relatedness, attraction of rituals or appealing values.
- Practice and material culture: prayer, meditation, yoga, fasting, pilgrimage, text reading, owning of objects with personal religious meaning.
- Beliefs: religious beliefs, relevant to the respondent.
- Experience: religious experiences and emotions.
- Ethics: ethical values taken from religion.
- Social participation: participation in religious groups: gatherings and services, membership, financial contributions, volunteering, or professional involvement.
- Identification: self-identification as a follower of a religion (I consider myself …).

Berghuijs (2017) translated these modalities into a large number of questions that measured the modalities per religious tradition (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and/or 'other' religion to be specified by the respondent). In the first survey we adopted a slightly shortened version of her questionnaire. In each modality-related question or set of questions, respondents were asked to indicate from which religious tradition(s) they draw. For instance, when a person indicates that he practices meditation, the next question is: 'To which religious tradition(s) is your meditation practice related? More than one answer possible'. The religions to choose from in these questions are: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and a 'different

religion' to be specified by the respondent. In some cases, an option like 'religion in general' was added. Those who had problems with the term 'religion' were assured that they could instead read 'faith' or 'spirituality'. If a respondent agrees to one or more of the items related to a specific modality and a specific religion, he or she is counted as having a belonging-relation to that religion. A person who has relations to two or more religious traditions is then counted as an MRBer.

In the second survey, we investigated bonding styles, mobility and motivation. We wished to compare monoreligious and multireligious respondents in our measurements of these perspectives. To this end, and in order to avoid the questionnaire becoming too long, we used the second, simple measurement as explained above to determine these groups, and we used these as independent variables. The monoreligious and multireligious each followed a separate route through the questionnaire, and were asked questions related to the names of the single or two religious traditions that each person mentioned as being the most important to them. The sample consists of 80 monoreligious (30%), 177 multireligious (67%), and 8 'secular' respondents (3%). Some characteristics of the groups are given in table 1. In the second survey, bonding styles, mobility and motivation were measured as dependent variables.

To measure religious bonding styles, we translated the four social bonding styles that Hischi (1969) distinguishes to religious bonding styles. Attachment refers to the extent that somebody feels connected with a religion in terms of emotions and experiences. An item that reflects this is '*In my religion, emotional experience is very important to me'* (where 'my religion' is always labelled in the religion that somebody identifies with). A person can also be related to his religion in terms of commitment, which is measured for example by: '*I express my religion in words and actions*'. Involvement is another type of social bonding where someone feels tied to a group or organization, which is reflected in the item: '*As a religious person, I depend on a group that supports and challenges me*'. Finally, conviction is a concept that refers to beliefs moral values and norms, like in: *'I associate my religion with values and norms that I try to live by*'. We developed a 12-item instrument based on items like these, which amounted into a reliable scale for each concept. Cronbach's α's for the scales varies from .732 to .894.

Extra information on bonding styles was obtained by using an open question, that asked respondents to describe in one or a few words how they view the nature of their relation with their religion or religions.

To study religious mobility, we applied the exit-voice-loyalty approach, developed for a market type situation by Hirschman (1970), to the choices that

TABLE 1 *Characteristics of the monoreligious and multireligious groups*

	mean age	% women	% involved in a community of their religion	religious traditions endorsed as single religion (monoreligious) or as first and second important religion (multireligious) (%)					
				Christianity	Islam	Judaism	Buddhism	Hinduism	other[a]
monoreligious (n=80)	49,3	50	88	78	5	1	0	0	16
multireligious, religion 1 (n=177)	52,7	64	63	57	4	4	12	2	22
multireligious, religion 2 (n=177)			23	18	3	20	32	7	20

a among which several Pagan and nature religions or indigenous religions (e.g. Maya, Ubuntu).

people have when they grow dissatisfied in their belonging to a religious belief or a religious group. We added a fourth choice, 'access', based on the willingness to accept a specific religious belief or join a religious group. For each choice, we developed a scale of four items. For access, an example is: '*If a religious conviction suits me, I am willing to accept it*'; and its corollary for joining a community: '*if a religious community appeals to me, I am willing to become a member*'. The scale for 'loyalty' is illustrated by: '*Even when I am occasionally disappointed, I do remain faithful to my religion*', and regarding the community: '*I support my* (*religious*) *community whatever happens, even if I do not subscribe to everything*'. Voice—indicating critical engagement, is expressed as for instance in the items: '*My religious conviction offers me opportunities to let my heart speak, when I disagree with religious prescriptions*', and its corollary: '*In my* (*religious*) *community, there is every opportunity to express deviant views*'. And finally 'exit', framing the preparedness to leave is phrased as for instance:

'*If I am not satisfied with a religious conviction, I will drop it*', and its community equal: '*I leave the* (*religious*) *community when I am disappointed*'. Cronbach's α's for the scales varies from .556 to .866.

Extra information on mobility was measured asking for the intensity and duration, and the salience of commitment per religion as indicated by the respondents. In the case of salience, we used a scale based on three items (influence of the religion on everyday life; role in important decisions; influence on political opinions; Cronbach's α = .746 for the monoreligious, .837 for the multireligious on their first religion, and .834 on their second religion).

In addition, through an open question respondents were asked to describe to whom or to what they are loyal in religious matters.

To measure motivation, we did not use the specific questions developed by Allport and Ross (1967) and Batson (1976) because they reflect a monoreligious, Christian religious lifestyle. However, the three different religious orientations inspired our set of questions, designed to find out why respondents' single or multiple religions are important to them. Intrinsic and quest motivations were measured with single items : *For me, religion is dedication to what transcends us humans* (intrinsic) and: *For me, religion is a quest* (quest); extrinsic motivation with a set of 9 items asking for specific benefits from religion, like personal development, happiness, comfort, or prosperity. In all cases, we asked for the relative importance of the item as compared to other aspects of religion.

The questionnaires belonging to both surveys are included in the appendix.

4 Results

4.1 *Mono- and Multiple Religious Belonging*

Table 2 specifies the results of the modalities approach. We see that Christianity (90%) is the most endorsed religion. As the historically most familiar religious tradition, this does not come as a surprise. Buddhism (60%) comes in the second place, before Judaism (54%) as third.

Although beliefs have been central in the study of religion for a long time, we can see here that these occupy only a third place for our respondents (78%) after affinity (97%), practices and material culture (92%), and social participation (87%). The number of MRBers in this sample is 85%. The other 15% has a relation with one or more modalities of only one religion, mostly Christianity (92%). The most prominent MRB combinations are those between Christianity and Buddhism (54% of the total sample), Christianity and Judaism (53%), and Christianity and Islam (37%). These percentages are much larger than those

TABLE 2 *Relation with different religions per modality of belonging (in per cent of the sample, N =265)*

modality \ religious tradition	religion in a general sense / all religions	Christianity	Islam	Judaism	Buddhism	Hinduism	other religion	relation with one or more religions on this modality	relation with two or more religions on this modality
affinity	56	81	21	42	52	23	29	97	71
practice and material culture	37	80	23	20	28	19	18	92	54
beliefs	45	62	13	19	20	11	18	78	35
experience	34	59	7	6	13	5	16	75	19
ethics		38	6	13	14	5	3	42	21
social participation		70	5	5	9	2	21	87	19
identification		65	6	6	14	7		72	14
relation with this religion on one or more modalities		90	38	54	60	35	37		

measured by Berghuijs (2017), because she used a representative sample of the Dutch population, while we recruited respondents among a group of people that were specifically interested in religion.[1]

As indicated before, throughout the second survey the respondents were asked questions about the specific religion or the two religions that they categorized as being the most important to them. The monoreligious comprise 78% Christians, 5% Muslims, and 1% Jews; 16% mentioned another religion, among which Baha'i and several forms of Paganism and Wicca. The most frequently named first important religion to the multireligious was Christianity, followed by Buddhism. As second important religion, Buddhism was mentioned most, followed by Judaism. From this point on however, we will compare the monoreligious with the multireligious, irrespective of the religious traditions they have relations with.

1 The two most prominent combinations in her study were the same as in ours: Christianity and Buddhism (13%) and Christianity and Judaism (11%).

TABLE 3 *Styles of belonging to religious views and communities for monoreligious and multireligious respondents (scale 1-4)*[a]

	monoreligious			multireligious					
				religion 1			religion 2		
	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.
attachment	75	3.7**	,49	158	3.4**	,62	133	2.8**	,78
commitment	74	3.6**	,42	149	3.2**	,75	135	2.6**	,82
involvement	76	3.3**	,78	152	2.5**	1,1	146	1.6**	,71
beliefs	78	3.6**	,49	151	3.4**	,57	142	2.8**	,77

** = difference between the monoreligious and multireligious, both for religion 1 and for religion 2, as well as differences between religion 1 and religion 2 for the multireligious, are significant ($p<.01$).

a Here and in all following scale constructions, we omitted those who did not answer or answered 'don't know' on one or more of the items. Therefore, n varies.

4.2 *Styles of Religious Belonging*

Table 3 presents the results on styles of religious belonging.

These results indicate relatively strong support on all styles of belonging, however less so for the multireligious respondents as compared to the monoreligious. The involvement style that emphasizes group integration (involvement) is relatively less strongly supported, and especially so among multi-religious respondents as concerns their second religion. They apparently tend to live their religiosity apart from religious institutions far more often than the monoreligious. However, they may be involved in less institutionalized groups and networks.

In addition, in an open question respondents were asked to describe in one or a few words how they view the nature of their relation with their religion or religions. Table 4 presents some examples of expressions by monoreligious respondents and by multireligious ones, including some informative metaphors according to which people describe these relations.

First of all, the examples reflect all bonding styles, with the 'involvement' style perhaps in an indirect way, expressed as in 'the home I live in', and 'warm'. Furthermore, it is interesting to see that the multireligious experience their relation with their first and their second religion as different in nature. The first religion is often felt as the familiar basis, and the second as a useful aid in life. In some cases, however, the second religion is the religion of origin and

TABLE 4 *Comparison of the nature of one's relation with a single or with two religious traditions*

I view my relation with my religion as....					
monoreligious		**multireligious**			
religion	**answer**	**religion 1**	**answer**	**religion 2**	**answer**
Christianity	the home I live in	Christianity	basis of faith	Buddhism	life attitude
Christianity	source of inspiration	Christianity	my source	Buddhism	my mirror
Christianity	loved child	Christianity	origin and destination	Buddhism	happiness
Christianity	follower of Jesus	Christianity	directing	Judaism	inspiring
Christianity	the soil beneath my feet	Christianity	warm	Judaism	familiar
Christianity	security	Christianity	upbringing	Islam	interest
Christianity	lifeblood	Paganism	my great support	Christianity	unavoidable relationship
Christianity	foundation	Paganism and Chaos Magick	self-determination	Christianity	living in harmony
Islam	love, peace, dedication, trust	Hinduism	practical: rituals and stories	Christianity	inspiration and ethical stories
Islam	my life and my death	Spirituality	faith without prescriptions	Christianity	mostly dismissed
Wicca	connection with myself and thus with my surroundings	Islam	support	Christianity	roots

respondents have clearly distanced themselves from it, although by acknowledging it as their second important religion they still retain a relation with it—even if it is, as one respondent seems to regret, 'unavoidable'. A last, provisional, conclusion suggests that the metaphors used by the monoreligious are 'stronger' in nature than those used by the multireligious, and that these suggest a stronger bond with their single religion than the multireligious have with their first or second religion.

TABLE 5 *Readiness to commit or detach oneself to religious views and communities (scale 1-4)*

	monoreligious			multireligious					
	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean		s.d.		
access	57	2,8	,82	118	2,7		,70		
					religion 1			religion 2	
				n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.
loyalty	61	3,4**	,46	79	3,2**	,59	23	2,8**	,61
voice	61	3,2	,63	91	3,3	,69	23	3,1	,74
exit	41	(2,4*)[1]	,57	73	2,6*/+	,57	27	2,8*/+	,76

** = significant differences between the monoreligious and multireligious for both religion 1 and 2 ($p<.01$).

* = significant difference between the monoreligious and multireligious, for both religion 1 and 2 ($p<.05$).

+ = significant difference for exit between religion 1 and religion 2 of the multireligious ($p<.1$).

1 = Cronbach's $\alpha = .556$, result added for comparison

4.3 *Mobility of Religious Belonging*

Table 5 presents the results on mobility. The scales related to voice, loyalty and exit could only be constructed for those involved in a religious community.

These results indicate that both the monoreligious and the multireligious vary in their readiness to adopt religious views or to join religious communities (access). They do not differ significantly, but both have a relatively high standard deviation It is remarkable however, that the monoreligious are on average susceptible to new beliefs and communities at almost the same level as the multireligious. The most significant differences are those concerning loyalty: the monoreligious are very loyal to their religious views and communities whereas the multireligious are clearly less loyal to their first religion than the monoreligious, and much less so to their second religion than to their first. However, all loyalties are above the average of the scale. The readiness to leave views or communities behind (exit) is clearly less present for those who focus on a single religion than to those who draw from different traditions;

TABLE 6 *Duration, intensity, and salience per religion for monoreligious and multireligious respondents*

		monoreligious	multireligious	
	measure		**religion 1**	**religion 2**
duration of involvement		n=80	n=172	n=172
more than5 years	%	100	91	81
between 1 and 5 years	%		8	17
less than 1 year	%		2	2
intensity of involvement		n=80	n=172	n=172
daily	%	89	67	27
weekly	%	9	21	31
monthly	%	3	8	23
once a year	%		2	10
less than once a year	%		2	9
salience		n=77	n=159	n=151
	scale 1-4	3,6**(s.d.=,58)	3,1**(s.d.=,83)	2,5**(s.d.=,81)

** = differences in salience between monoreligious and multireligious both for religion 1 and 2, as well as difference for salience between the multireligious' first and second religion are significant (p<.01).

moreover, the multireligious are more ready to leave their second religion than their first.

Additional data on mobility, in the sense or duration and intensity of involvement and salience per religion, derived from the second survey, are given in table 6.

We see that all monoreligious are involved in their religion for more than five years, and most of them (97%) on a daily or weekly basis. Their religion is highly salient for them (3,6 on the scale of 1-4). The multireligious clearly have to divide their attention between their two religions. Intensity of involvement for their first religion is somewhat less (88% daily or weekly) than for the monoreligious, and more so (58% daily or weekly) for their second religion; the salience for each religion is lower than the salience the monoreligious experience in their single religion.

Furthermore, in an open question respondents were asked to describe to whom or to what they are loyal in religious matters. In the answers, five categories were often recurring as table 7 indicates.

TABLE 7 *Religious loyalty as indicated by monoreligious and multireligious respondents* (%)

		monoreligious (n = 78)	**multireligious (n = 148)**
In religion, I am loyal to … (open question, categories of answers in %)	God	50**	27**
	norms/values	21	16
	Jesus/Christ	18*	7*
	Church	14*	5*
	myself	9**	34**

** significant difference between monoreligious and multireligious ($p<.01$).

* significant difference between monoreligious and multireligious ($p<.05$).

The table illustrates very clearly that for the monoreligious God is the most important, when loyalty in religious matters is concerned. Aside from God, they are loyal to the norms and values they relate to their religion. Then follow 'Jesus' or 'Christ', and their religious communities (in our case, mostly churches), while 'myself' comes only as fifth. In contrast, the multireligious put themselves in the first place, and God second, indicating that their focus has clearly shifted. Obviously, being true to themselves and to God, is directly related to more freedom in associating themselves with other beliefs and religious institutions.

4.4 *Motivation for Religious Belonging*

Table 8 offers the results on intrinsic and quest motivations for religious belonging.

We see that the monoreligious and the multireligious do not differ significantly between their intrinsic attitudes towards religion; however, the multireligious tend to a quest orientation just as much as to an intrinsic motivation, while the monoreligious see religion far less often as a quest. As for extrinsic motivations, we asked for agreement with a number of statements. For the monoreligions, the questions were formulated in relation to their single religion; for the multireligious in relation to each of the two religions separately, because motivations may differ between their two religions. In table 9 we compare the five most endorsed motivations in terms of their order of importance.

For the multireligious, intrinsic motivation features most frequently as most important; for the monoreligious the extrinsic function of obtaining peace, consolation and related benefits is most frequently named as the most

TABLE 8 *Intrinsic and quest motivations for belonging for monoreligious and multireligious respondents (scores on a scale 1 (low)-4 (high))*

	monoreligious (n=78)		multireligious (n=159)	
	mean	**s.d.**	**mean**	**s.d.**
For me, religion is dedication to what transcends us humans (intrinsic motivation)	3,3	,77	3,4	,78
For me, religion is a quest	2,9**	,94	3,4**	,69

** = significant difference between the monoreligious and multireligious (p<.01).

TABLE 9 *Order of importance of the five most endorsed motivations (endorsed as: this is the most important aspect for me) for religious involvement for monoreligious and multireligious respondents*

item	**monoreligious (n=78)**	**multireligious (n=155-159)**	
For me, religion is dedication to what trainscends us humans (intrinsic)	2	1	
For me, religion is a quest	5	2	
		religion 1	**religion 2**
[This religion] gives me peace, consolation, something to hold on to, guidance, or hope	1	4	5
[This religion] helps me to develop and improve myself	3	3	3
Because of [this religion] I am better able to cope with life	3		5
[This religion] helps me with moral guidelines		5	
[This religion] helps me to obtain a happy life			4

important, directly followed by intrinsic motivation. For the multireligious, obtaining peace comes in the fourth place for their first religion and in the fifth place for their second religion, and is thus less frequently experienced as the most important. For them, the quest attitude comes at a second place, whereas it only comes in the fifth place for the monoreligious, after the extrinsic benefits of coping with life (third) and self-development and -improvement (also third). Self-improvement is also the third most important for the multireligious, both in their first and in their second religion. If we look at differences between the multireligious' two religions, we see that moral guidelines gain more importance in their first religion, whereas obtaining a happy life and coping with life play a role of importance in their second religion. Moral guidelines and a happy life are not among the five most important motivations for the monoreligious. We might speculate that they do not relate their ethics specifically to their religion as such as to the culture they grew up in. As for the importance of obtaining a happy life, this may represent a socially undesirable answer for monoreligious respondents (most of whom are Christians) who have been taught not to put themselves in the first place.

5 Discussion

In looking back on the analyses that we presented above, we are now able to answer our research questions.

The first research question referred to the ways our respondents are related to different religious traditions. In this sample of individuals interested in religion, we learned that 85% combines elements from more than one religious tradition according to the modalities approach, and 67% according to the direct self-identification approach. The most prominent combinations of religions our respondents draw from are Christianity combined with Buddhism, and Christianity combined with Judaism. Although beliefs have been central and conceptually decisive in the study of religion for a long time, for our respondents, practices and material culture, and social participation appear to be more important than beliefs. As such, multiple religious belonging is an important phenomenon that points out the necessity to adapt and differentiate the type of surveys that only ask for 'canonical' definitions of religious commitment in terms of exclusive convictions, proofs of membership or participation in church services.

The second question aimed at identifying the differences in styles of belonging among individuals focused to one religion as compared to those drawing from multiple religions. We observed stronger belonging characteristics

among individuals who focus on one religion as compared to those drawing from multiple religions, and especially in group involvement where we see lower support among the multireligious, even more so in relation to their second religion than to their first. Looking at the answers on an open question, we observed that the multireligious experience their relation with their first and their second religion as different in nature. The first religion is often felt as the familiar basis, the second as a useful aid in life. The descriptions used by the monoreligious appear to indicate a stronger bond with their single religion than the multireligious have with their first or second religion.

The third question was aimed at observing the likelihood for religious mobility when comparing individuals focusing on one religion as compared to those drawing from multiple religions. We found that where mobility in belonging is concerned, a 'voice' attitude (indicative of critical engagement) is above average in both groups, while the 'exit' option is relatively more supported among the multireligious respondents in relation to their second religion. Monoreligious respondents are clearly most loyal, while multi-religious respondents are less supportive, especially of their second religion. All monoreligious are involved in their religion for more than five years, and most of them on a daily or weekly basis. Their religion is highly salient for them. The multireligious show less frequent involvement in their first religion than the monoreligious, and even less in their second religion; the salience for each of their religions is lower than the salience the monoreligious experience in their single religion.

The fourth question looked at the motivations for belonging among individuals focusing on one religion as compared to those drawing from multiple religions. Here our research indicates that for the multireligious, intrinsic motivation is the most supported attitude, followed by a quest attitude, and an extrinsic attitude aimed at developing and improving yourself. For the monoreligious, obtaining peace, consolation, something to hold on to, guidance, or hope is most frequently named as the most important, directly followed by intrinsic motivation. A quest attitude for them only occupies a fifth place.

We can summarize the results in a number of characteristics of the multireligious that have come forward in the research data. These characteristics certainly do not apply to all individual multireligious, but together they form a kind of ideal-typical picture of the way in which multiple religious belonging is experienced.

Generally spoken, in comparison to their monoreligious counterparts, multireligious respondents are characterized by their larger flexibility in religious matters. Moreover, they tend to focus on similarities and common elements in

different religions, and less on boundaries between them. By dividing their attention between their different religious sources, emotional and institutional ties seem less strong for each individual religious tradition. We emphasize that this may, but is not necessarily in contradiction with an intensive experience of their own form of religion, precisely because of their multiple involvement. Their great flexibility is grounded in a single and primary religious or spiritual loyalty, which they express as loyalty to themselves or loyalty to God. Therefore they feel free to adopt and to leave behind religious beliefs and communities in their religious quest, striving to develop and improve themselves and to obtain a happy life. For motivated and educated groups—that we obviously had in our sample—religion does not coincide with traditional ascription but is rather a matter of achievement (Linton 1936). Choice, comparison, and quest are definitely important and display an autonomous stance regarding religious belonging.

We may interpret our findings in terms of an ongoing process of secularization and individualization expressed in a loosening of community control regarding confessional orthodoxy. However, our design and data do not allow for an interpretation of longitudinal trends. We also didn't ask for the motives of our respondents regarding their choice to participate in our research. Yet it seems striking that especially the older (50-60 yrs) and higher educated did participate. Our group of multireligious respondents appears to represent the intellectual part of the older generation for whom it has been important to distance themselves from institutionalized religion and testify their faith according to a broad and more inclusive conception of religion. When interpreted from the Dutch formerly pillarized society, MRB can be regarded as a reflection of their effort to distinguish themselves from the single religious belonging of their parents. In that case, MRB could prove to be a contextual and cohort specific phenomenon rather than a lasting trend. The younger generations, as far as they are no longer socialized by religious education, may turn out to be more interested in one specific religion, than committed to the arduous effort of investing in self-selected assemblage of various religions. Indicative for this interpretation is that recent research has shown that orthodoxy is on the increase among young church members in the Netherlands (Hart, 2014; Bernts and Berghuijs 2016). However, this latter trend may be a consequence of self-selection: only the most orthodox young believers (a minority in their generation) choose to belong to a church today. More decisive in this respect are the results from Berghuijs (2017), where MRB appears to be about the same in all age groups. In that case, the participation of many older and highly educated respondents in this non-representative follow-up survey is also a form of

self-selection, which suggests a greater need for legitimization of their changed religious attitude over time. It is hoped that follow-up research sheds light on these intriguing matters.

Acknowledgements

This study is part of the project 'Geloven in veelvoud' of the research programme 'Religie in de moderne samenleving, which is financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). We thank master student Ruud Roelevink for his assistance.

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Appendix: Survey Questions Used

Survey 2015

Affinity
Are you attracted to religion(s)? More than one answer per row is possible.
- I am inspired by …
- I feel related to …
- I find the rituals attractive of …
- I find the values appealing of …
- I feel at home with …
  (columns: religion in a general sense / Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other religious tradition / no religion)

Social participation
Are you involved with a religious group in one or more of the following ways? More than one answer per row is possible.
- attendance of gatherings or celebrations
- membership
- financial contribution
- volunteering
- professional involvement
- (columns: Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other religious tradition / no)

Experience
Which of the following experiences have you had:
- a concurrence of events in my life which made me feel: this cannot be a coincidence
- a feeling of connectedness with other people, even if they are quite different from me
- an experience of connectedness to all life around me
- a feeling of connectedness to God / the divine
- an experience in which the nature of reality became clear to me
- an experience of receiving help as an answer to my prayer
- seeing a deceased person or another experience of contact with a deceased person
- An experience of an invisible power that somehow offered me council, advice or guidance
- being deeply touced by music or a song
- being deeply touched by a ritual
- another experience that was religious to me

(columns: yes, and I attach a religious meaning to it / yes, but I do not attach a religious meaning to it / no)

If you have had one or more experiences to which you attach a religious meaning, with which religious tradition(s) did you feel this experience or these experiences were connected? More than one answer possible.

(Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other religious tradition: .../ no specific religious tradition)

Practice

Do you practice

- prayer (aside from religious gatherings)
- meditation
- yoga
- fasting
- pilgrimage
- other religious practice(s): ...

(yes / no)

If you do practice any of these activities: are these activities, for you personally, connected to a religious tradition? More than one answer possible.

(to no religion / to religion in a general sense / to Christianity / to Islam / to Judaism / to Buddhism / to Hinduism / to another religious tradition: ...)

Material religion

Do you possess religious objects?

- a Bible
- a crucifix (on the wall or as an adornment)
- a Qur'an
- a prayer rug
- a Tanakh
- a Hanukkah chandelier
- Buddhist sutras
- a Buddha statue
- a Bhagavad Gita
- a home altar (Hindu)
- other: ...

(columns: yes, and it holds a personal religious significance to me / yes, but it holds no personal religious significance to me / no)

Beliefs

People can feel supported by certain religious convictions or beliefs. Some will be convinced that Jesus Christ died for their sins. Others will be sure that by abandoning desire you can reach enlightenment. Some believe in angels, reincarnation, the Goddess, chakras or astrology. These are but a few examples. Do you have one or more religious convictions that are important to you?

(yes / no)

(if yes) Please describe your most important religious convictions or beliefs.

Conviction or belief: …

(open question, repeated to a maximum of three convictions/beliefs)

Is this conviction or belief connected to a religious tradition? More than one answer possible.

(to religion in a general sense / to Christianity / to Islam / to Judaism / to Buddhism / to Hinduism / to another religious tradition: …)

Ethics

Which values are important to you? Do you draw these from a religious tradition?

- forgiveness
- compassion
- charity
- gratitude
- humility
- other: …

(columns: important, and part of all religions / important, and I draw it from one or more religious traditions / important, and I do not draw it from a religious tradition / not important)

If you draw the values that are important to you from one or more specific religious traditions, which traditions do you mean? More than one answer possible.

(Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other: …)

Self-identification

Please indicate if the following expressions apply to you. More than one answer possible.

I consider myself a:

- Christian
- Muslim

– Jew
– Buddhist
– Hindu
– other (related to religion or spirituality): …

Survey 2016

Determination of the multireligious and their religions
To what extent do you agree with:
– I combine elements of different religious traditions in my life
(yes, certainly / I think so / I think not / no, certainly not)

For those who do combine:
– You have indicated that you combine elements from different religious traditions in your life. Which traditions? Please tick at least two boxes.
(Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other religious tradition)

Maybe you have chosen more than two religious traditions. We want to know wich two are the most important to you. Which one comes first? If they are both evenly important, just give one of them here and the other at the next question
(Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other religious tradition)

And which other religious tradition is the next important or evenly important?
(Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other religious tradition)

Determination of the monoreligious and the secular respondents (For those who are not multireligious)
Is there a religious tradition from which you draw in your personal life, and if so, which is it?
(no religion / Christianity / Islam / Judaism / Buddhism / Hinduism / other: …)

Intensity of involvement (per religion: for the monoreligious, related to their single religion; for the multireligious, for each of their two religions)
– How intensive is your involvement? (very intensive / average / little)
– How long have you been involved? (more than five years / between one and five years / less than 1 year)
– How often do you spend time to this religion? (daily / weekly / monthly / yearly / less than once a year)

For all following items related *to access, exit, voice* and *loyalty* (Hirschman), as well as for all items related to *attachment*, *commitment*, *involvement* and *belief* (Hirschi) the columns with options are: yes, certainly / I think so / I think not / no, certainly not.

To what extent do you agree with:

Access

- If a religious conviction suits me, I am willing to accept it
- As soon as I feel related to a religious conviction, I start propagating it
- If a religious community appeals to me, I am willing to become a member
- I consider myself a member of a religious community if I realise that it appeals to me

Loyalty

- Even when I am occasionally disappointed, I do remain faithful to [my religion]
- I keep following my religious conviction sincerely, whatever may happen

Voice

- My religious conviction offers me opportunities to let my heart speak, when I disagree with religious prescriptions
- If I do not agree with something in [my religion], I have every opportunity to protest

Exit

- If I am not satisfied with a religious conviction, I will drop it
- If I do not feel related to a religious conviction any more, I no longer propagate it

Only for those involved in a religious community of their single religion, or multiple religions (per religion):

To what extent do you agree with:

Loyalty

- I can identify with my community, even if I do not always agree with everything
- I support my community whatever happens, even if I do not subscribe to everything

Voice

- In my community, there is every opportunity to express deviant views
- The community offers every possibility to voice protest if I do not agree with its doctrines.

Exit
– I leave the community if it no longer appeals to me
– I leave the community when I am disappointed

Per religion (for the monoreligious, related to their single religion; for the multireligious, for each of their two religions)

To what extent do you agree with:
Attachment
– I feel connected to [this religion]
– In [this religion], emotional experience is very important to me
– I can identify myself very well with [this religion] in an emotional sense

Commitment
– I express [this religion] in words and actions
– My actions are motivated by [this religion]
– [This religion] is reflected in my life style

Involvement
– In my religious life, it is important to me to belong to a community of [this religion]
– My religious development is related to being part of a community of [this religion]
– As a religious person, I depend on a group of [this religion] that supports and challenges me

Belief
– I relate [this religion] with a number of convictions that are important to me
– I associate [this religion] with with values and norms that I try to live by
– In the ethics that I follow, my connection with [this religion] is expressed

Salience (per religion: for the monoreligious, related to their single religion; for the multireligious, for each of their two religions)
How important is [this religion] to you?
– [This religion] has a large influence on my everyday life
– If I have important decisions to make, [this religion] plays an important role
– [This religion] has a large influence on my political opinions
(columns: yes, certainly / I think so / I think not / no, certainly not)

Intrinsic and quest motivation (all religious respondents)
How do you feel about the following expressions concerning religion?
– For me, religion is dedication to what transcends us humans

– For me, religion is a quest
  (columns: this is the most important aspect to me / this is important to me beside other aspects of religion / this is less important to me than other aspects of religion / this is not important to me)

Extrinsic motivation (per religion: for the monoreligious, related to their single religion; for the multireligious, for each of their two religions)
How do you feel about the following expressions concerning religion?
– Because of [this religion] I am better able to cope with life
– [This religion] helps me to develop and improve myself
– [This religion] helps me to obtain a happy life
– [This religion] gives me peace, consolation, something to hold on to, guidance, or hope
– [This religion] helps me with moral guidelines
– [This religion] brings me special contacts with other people
– Those involved in [this religion] help and support each other
– In [this religion] I feel part of a community
– [This religion] helps me to obtain prosperity in my life
  (columns: this is the most important aspect to me / this is important to me beside other aspects of religion / this is less important to me than other aspects of religion / this is not important to me)

Style of belonging (open question: for the monoreligious, related to their single religion; for the multireligious, for each of their two religions):
Could you describe the nature of your relationship with [this religion] in one or a few words? …

Loyalty (open question to all religious respondents)
To whom or what are you faithful in religious matters? …